

## COMMISSIONER SIMINGTON ADDRESSES WISPAMERICA 2023

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Hello, it's very good to be with you all virtually today. I am delighted to speak about the importance of fixed wireless technology in eliminating the connectivity gap in America's digital economy. Fixed wireless broadband is a technology that deserves more recognition for its value in bringing unserved and underserved communities online across America.

It is widely agreed that the technologies and services enabled by broadband access, including both consumer services, on the one hand, and industrial and agricultural applications, on the other, are crucial to full participation in today's economy. And while I think that fixed wireless technology can efficiently serve all communities, this is especially true for rural communities, because fixed wireless is high-speed, reliable, and perhaps most importantly, can be deployed quickly. Rural America needs access to high-speed and reliable technologies today, not years from now, in order to remain competitive in our nation's economy. Despite the important role fixed wireless has played in achieving this goal, our policymakers have failed to realize the true potential of fixed wireless and other wireless technologies, among them satellite, and have, in doing so, disadvantaged wireless technology providers' ability to compete in the marketplace by gaining access to the funds available in government programs aimed at serving rural America.

I fully agree with WISPA's recent statements about the lack of technological neutrality in the BEAD program. The definitions adopted by NTIA have, unfortunately, stacked the deck in favor of fiber deployments—in places where fiber will likely take years to build-out, if it's even possible, whether because of the difficulties presented by the terrain in specific areas, the lack of infrastructure for supporting fiber, or competition for limited fiber supplies from more densely populated markets. We must reconsider this approach if we wish for rural America to keep pace with the rest of the U.S and the U.S with the rest of the world.

WISPA's members, and the fixed wireless industry generally, are scrappy and innovative and were willing to endeavor to build-out broadband in hard to serve areas even before money from government programs was available. Yet despite successfully serving these communities, federal policies would rather ignore these successes in favor of pie-in-the-sky ideals about fiber's technological superiority or the necessity of 100 Mbps symmetry for all broadband networks. It remains a mystery to me why we continue to fixate on ideology when we face such a pressing need to reach rural America. Particularly when we currently have a way to do that expeditiously.

And don't just take it from me. As per the Communications Marketplace Report, the operator with the largest fixed broadband footprint—at 60 percent of the population—was T-Mobile, because of its rapid deployment (thanks to the T-Mobile/Sprint merger commitments) of a fixed wireless network that has allowed the company to achieve the largest footprint based on the percentage of the U.S. population covered. And other large wireless carriers have also grown their networks to cover large proportions of the population.

I mention this as an anecdote to mostly draw attention to how ahead of the curve WISPA's membership is and has been for years in choosing to deploy fixed wireless access networks across America's heartland. Keep up the good work.

Thank you all for letting me join you today—if only virtually—and enjoy the rest of the conference.